

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Replacement formal drawings of Figures 1-13 are submitted concurrently herewith under a separate cover letter.

Annotated marked-up drawings of Figures 1, 3-4 and 6-13 are submitted concurrently herewith under a separate cover letter to illustrate the revisions made to these drawings.

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1-13 are amended. Thus, claims 1-13 are active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

The specification and abstract have been carefully reviewed and revised in order to correct grammatical and idiomatic errors in order to aid the Examiner in further consideration of the application. The amendments to the specification and abstract are incorporated in the attached substitute specification and abstract. No new matter has been added.

Also attached hereto is a marked-up version of the substitute specification and abstract illustrating the changes made to the original specification and abstract.

Replacement formal drawings of Figures 1-13 are submitted concurrently herewith under a separate cover letter to correct a mislabeled element in Figure 1. In particular, the specification describes the locker utilization reservations system of the first embodiment as comprising a plurality of lockers 12a to 12n. However, Figure 1 only illustrates lockers (locker groups) 12a, 12b and 12c. Accordingly, to be consistent with the specification and the remaining drawings, Figure 1 has been revised to illustrate lockers 12a, 12b...12n.

In addition, the delivery control center of the third embodiment is described with reference to Figure 6 by being denoted with reference numeral 40. However, the delivery control center was not denoted with a reference numeral in Figure 6. Therefore, Figure 6 has been revised to denote the delivery control center with reference numeral 40.

The reservations specification system of the fourth embodiment is described in lines 16-18 on page 46 of the original specification as comprising a "cooperation web site 40" which cooperates with the control center via the internet network 20. Figure 11 is a block diagram illustrating the configuration of the reservations specification system of the fourth embodiment. However, Figure 11 illustrates reference numeral 40 as denoting a "delivery control center" instead of the cooperation web site. Accordingly, Figure 11 has been revised to replace the terms "delivery control center" in Figure 11 with "cooperation web site."

Furthermore, minor editorial revisions have been made to Figures 3-4, 7-10 and 12-13 in order to correct misspelled words and to improve the grammar thereof. No new matter has been added via the revisions to Figures 1, 3-4 and 6-13. Approval of the replacement formal drawings is respectfully requested.

For the Examiner's convenience, annotated marked-up drawings of Figures 1, 3-4 and 6-13 are submitted concurrently herewith under a separate cover letter to illustrate the revisions made to these drawings.

The Applicant notes that the Examiner failed to acknowledge, item 12 on the Office Action Summary form (Form PTO-326), the Applicant's claim of foreign priority based on Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-055805, and the receipt of the certified copy of the foreign priority document. A Claim of Priority and the certified copy of the foreign priority document were filed on October 23, 2003. For the Examiner's convenience, a copy of the Claim of Priority is submitted herewith. The Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to acknowledge the Applicant's claim of foreign priority and the receipt of the certified copy of the foreign priority document.

Minor editorial revisions were made to claims 1-13 in order to improve their U.S. form. The revisions to claims 1-13 do not, however, limit the scope of protection for the present invention.

In item 2 on page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Gokcebay et al. (U.S. 6,791,450). This rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

The present invention provides a locker system which is capable of surely securing an available locker where a utilization applicant (which may be either a customer or a delivery trader) can specify and reserve any one of a plurality of lockers as an address-for-delivery of a parcel or merchandise to which the customer desires the parcel or merchandise to be delivered.

In particular, as described, for example, in the Summary of the Invention section of the specification, the present invention provides the following novel features of a locker system:

1. A locker system in which an available locker can be surely secured based on a user's utilization reservations of the home delivery locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel or merchandise.
2. A locker system in which the delivery trader is able to surely secure the home delivery locker of the address-for-delivery before actually performing delivery of the parcel or merchandise, upon reserving utilization of the home delivery locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel or merchandise.
3. A locker system which improves the utilization turnover of home delivery lockers that are installed at various places.
4. A locker system which is operable to forward the parcel or merchandise once stored in a first locker toward another required locker or another location according to a simple procedure and method.
5. A locker system which is operable to surely secure, when specifying the home delivery locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel or merchandise, the home delivery locker of the address-for-delivery upon selectively specifying the available locker, after confirming the availability of the installation locker and/or utilization circumstances of the home delivery locker as the address-for-delivery.

Independent claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13 define the above-identified novel inventions.

In particular, claim 1 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a control center for controlling the plurality of lockers, and a communication line network for connecting the plurality of lockers to the control center. As recited in claim 1, a utilization applicant of a locker accesses, when a locker among the plurality of lockers that the utilization applicant desires to utilize is in a busy condition, the control center from the predetermined operating means or from an available terminal apparatus for the utilization applicant via the communication line network, and transmits a utilization reservations signal of a locker and a contact address of the utilization applicant as reservations information. Furthermore, claim 1 recites that the control center is operable to perform, when the locker among the plurality of lockers that the utilization applicant desires to utilize becomes available, a utilization reservations operation of the locker, while transmitting a

locking instruction of the available locker, and to then notify that the locker is available to the contact address of the utilization applicant. In addition, claim 1 recites that the utilization applicant confirms that the locker is available based on the notification from the control center, then proceeds to an installation location of the corresponding locker, and then unlocks the locked locker by using the predetermined operating means in order to leave a parcel on check at the locker.

Accordingly, claim 1 recites that a utilization applicant can transmit a utilization reservation signal to the control center for a desired locker and the utilization applicant's contact address, and the control center, when the desired locker becomes available, performs a utilization reservation operation of reserving the desired locker and notifies the contact address of the utilization applicant that the desired locker is available.

Claim 3 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a terminal apparatus which is available for a utilization applicant of a locker, and a communication line network for connecting the plurality of networks to the terminal apparatus. As recited in claim 3, the utilization applicant of the locker transmits, when the locker among the plurality of lockers that the utilization applicant desires to utilize is in a busy condition, a utilization reservations signal of the locker and a contact address of the utilization applicant to any one of the plurality of lockers from the predetermined operating means or the terminal apparatus via the communication line network. Claim 3 defines that each of the plurality of lockers has observing means for observing utilization circumstances of the lockers, and communicating means for communicating with the terminal apparatus. As further recited in claim 3, when the communicating means receives the utilization reservations signal and the contact address via the communication line network, the observing means then finds that the locker that the utilization applicant desires to utilize becomes available and subsequently reserves the desired locker while locking the locker, and the communicating means transmits a communication indicating that the desired locker is available to the contact address of the utilization applicant.

Accordingly, claim 3 recites that the desired locker itself receives, from the utilization applicant, the utilization reservation and the utilization applicant's contact address, and the desired locker itself performs the utilization reservation operation and

transmits a communication to the contract address of the utilization applicant indicating that the desired locker is available.

Claim 5 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a control center for consolidating the plurality of lockers, a delivery trader for delivering parcels to predetermined places depending on prescribed means of transportation, a user terminal possessed by a user, and a communication line for connecting the plurality of lockers, the control center, and the user terminal, where a parcel stored in an arbitrary locker among the plurality lockers is made to be delivered for an address-for-delivery specified by the user. As recited in claim 5, the user obtains information of the address-for-delivery of the parcel from the control center beforehand, and then specifies an address-for-delivery of the parcel based on the obtained information by using the predetermined operating means or the user terminal in order to transmit a communication about the specified address-for-delivery of the parcel to the control center. Furthermore, claim 5 recites that the control center is operable to instruct the delivery trader delivering the parcel of the address-for-delivery from the locker based on the information about an additional location of the address-for-delivery of the parcel specified by the operating means or the user terminal. Claim 5 also recites that the delivery trader is operable to execute collection of cargo of parcel from the locker in which the parcel is stored once, by using the prescribed means of transportation based on the instruction for causing the parcel to be delivered for the additional address-for-delivery of the parcel.

Accordingly, claim 5 recites that the user can specify an additional (new) address-for-delivery for parcel that is once stored in an arbitrary locker as a first address-for-delivery, the control center instructs the delivery trader of the additional address-for-delivery for the parcel, and the delivery trader causes the once stored parcel to be delivered anew to the additional address-for-delivery.

Claim 9 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a control center for consolidating the plurality of lockers, a user terminal possessed by a user, and a communication line for connecting the plurality of lockers, the control center and the user terminal. Claim 9 recites that the user is able to select previously any one of the plurality of lockers as an address-for-delivery

of the parcel which the user himself desires to deliver, and the user can specify to reserve the selected locker. Furthermore, claim 9 defines that the user requires to obtain information from the control center concerning the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel by using the predetermined operating means or the user terminal. In addition, claim 9 recites that the control center is operable to transmit, in accordance with the requirement of the user, positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker as the address-for-delivery to the locker or the user terminal so that the user selects to specify the required address-for-delivery of the parcel based on the positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker, and so that the user is capable of performing a reservations specification of the required home delivery locker of an address-for-delivery of the parcel.

Accordingly, claim 9 recites that the user is able to specify and reserve a selected locker, and to require information from the control center by using the operating means of the locker or the user terminal as to the positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker so as to allow the user to specify the required address-for-delivery of the parcel based on the positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker.

Claim 12 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a control center for consolidating the plurality of lockers, a user terminal possessed by the user, and a communication line for connecting the plurality of lockers, the control center and the user terminal. As recited in claim 12, the user accesses the control center from the predetermined operating means or the user terminal, and concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with a parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information. Furthermore, claim 12 recites that the control center is operable to notify a delivery company which is involved in a business cooperation with the control center of positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel with the parcel recipient being absent. Claim 12 further recites that the delivery company completes, when the parcel recipient of the address-for-delivery is absent at the time of delivery of the parcel, the delivery of the parcel based on the notified positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel. Claim 12 also recites

the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel notifies, when the parcel is stored, the user terminal that the parcel is stored based on the utilization contract information from the control center.

Accordingly, claim 12 recites that the user concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with a parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information, the control center notifies the delivery company of the positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery when the recipient is absent, and the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel notifies the user terminal when the parcel is stored.

Claim 13 recites a locker system comprising a plurality of lockers provided with predetermined operating means, a control center for consolidating the plurality of lockers, a user terminal possessed by a user, and a communication line for connecting the plurality of lockers, the control center and the user terminal. Claim 13 recites that the user accesses the control center from the predetermined operating means or the user terminal, and concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with the parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information. Claim 13 also recites that the control center is operable to notify a delivery company which is involved in a business cooperation with the control center of positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel with the parcel recipient being absent. Furthermore, claim 13 recites that the delivery company completes, when the parcel recipient of the address-for-delivery is absent at the time of delivery of the parcel, the delivery of the parcel based on the notified positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel. In addition, claim 13 recites that the control center is operable to notify, when confirming that the parcel is stored in the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel, the user terminal that the parcel is stored based on the utilization contract information.

Accordingly, claim 13 recites that the user concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with a parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information, the control center notifies the delivery company of the positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery when the recipient

is absent, and the control center, when confirming that the parcel is stored in the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel, notifies the user terminal when the parcel is stored.

Gokcebay et al. discloses a networked locker system to allow customers to order merchandise from businesses and to have the ordered merchandise be delivered to a public locker system that both the customer and the delivery company can access. Gokcebay et al. also discloses that customers can deposit (drop off) items such as laundry and camera film in the public locker system so that service industry personnel can retrieve the items from the locker and perform the required service on the deposited items. The system of Gokcebay et al. was devised due to the fact that individuals with demanding schedules are often unable to receive packages at home for deliveries or to drop off serviceable items during the business hours of the service personnel. The system of Gokcebay et al. was also devised to attempt to alleviate the amount of repeat delivery trips on the part of delivery personnel who conventionally have to re-deliver merchandise or parcels when the recipient was not home (see Column 1, lines 9-16 and Column 1, line 62 to Column 2, line 8).

Gokcebay et al. discloses that an online customer 40 orders goods from a vendor 41, and during the transaction, the customer can select a delivery company or the vendor can automatically select the delivery company. The online customer 40, while making the purchase, is also given access to the locker system's microprocessor 45 and the locker application software used by the microprocessor. This allows the customer 40 to be able to select a locker site, an appropriate locker size and a window of time for picking up the order. Alternatively, Gokcebay et al. discloses that the vendor 41 can select the appropriate locker size while the customer 40 only selects the locker site. In any event, the microprocessor 45 consults a locker database 48 having information about the availability of the lockers in the locker system (see Column 3, lines 22-52).

Gokcebay et al. also discloses that each locker has a re-programmable lock code, each of the locker's locks are connected to the locker application software via the microprocessor 45 by means of a bus (land line) 52, and the lockers are located at a remote location from the microprocessor 45. Based on the customer's 40 criteria for a locker indicated in the transaction, the microprocessor 45 searches for and selects an available locker by consulting the information in the locker database 48, and notifies the

selected locker of the access code for unlocking the selected locker. The microprocessor 45 or the vendor 41 also notifies the customer 40 of the access code of the selected locker and the expected delivery time of the ordered merchandise (see Column 3, line 57 to Column 4, line 36).

Gokcebay et al. also discloses that when the delivery company opens the door of the selected locker, the microprocessor 45 assumes that the opening of the door to mean that the merchandise was delivered. After the prescribed delivery time, the customer 40 goes to the selected locker, uses the notified access code and is given access to the locker compartment to obtain the ordered merchandise. Upon the opening of the compartment door after the delivery company is assumed to have delivered the ordered merchandise, the microprocessor 45 also assumes that the second opening of the door (by the customer 40) means that the customer 40 has obtained the ordered merchandise, and the selected locker is then recorded in the locker system database 48 as being available (see Column 4, lines 45-65).

Although the Examiner did not address all of the particular limitations of claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13 in rejecting claims 1-13, the Applicant respectfully submits that Gokcebay et al. does not disclose or suggest each and every limitation of claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13 for the following reasons.

As described above, Gokcebay et al. discloses that a customer 40 selects whichever locker is available in the desired locker site based on the information stored in the locker system database 48, or the vendor 41 can automatically select a particular locker when the customer 40 selects the desired locker site. Regardless of whether the customer 40 or the vendor 41 selects the desired locker, neither the customer 40 or the vendor 41 can select a locker if the locker is not available based on the information in the locker system database 48. In other words, the customer 40 or the vendor 41 are limited as to which lockers in the desired locker site can be selected based on the availability of the lockers in the desired locker site. If a desired locker site is unavailable, the transaction proceeds by selecting another locker.

Accordingly, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that a utilization applicant can transmit a utilization reservation signal to the control center for a desired locker when the desired locker is in a busy condition as well as the utilization applicant's

contact address, and the control center (microprocessor 45), when the desired locker becomes available, performs a utilization reservation operation of reserving the desired locker and notifies the contact address of the utilization applicant that the desired locker is available, as recited in claim 1.

Furthermore, Gokcebay et al. also clearly does not disclose that the desired locker itself receives, from the utilization applicant, the utilization reservation and the utilization applicant's contact address, and the desired locker itself performs the utilization reservation operation and transmits a communication to the contract address of the utilization applicant indicating that the desired locker is available, as recited in claim 3. Instead, as described above, Gokcebay et al. merely discloses that the microprocessor 45 is able to reserve a locker based on the available lockers in accordance with the information present in the locker system database 48. Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that the lockers themselves are able to receive the utilization reservation.

Gokcebay et al. also does not disclose that a utilization applicant can specify an additional (new) address-for-delivery of merchandise that was already once stored in a locker, where the delivery company then delivers the merchandise to the additional address-for-delivery from the previous address-for-delivery. Accordingly, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that the user can specify an additional address-for-delivery for parcel that is once stored in an arbitrary locker as a first address-for-delivery, the control center instructs the delivery trader of the additional address-for-delivery for the parcel, and the delivery trader causes the once stored parcel to be delivered to the additional address-for-delivery, as recited in claim 5.

Gokcebay et al. also does not disclose or suggest that the customer 40 is able to request information about the positional information and utilization circumstances of an available locker so that the customer 40 decides which locker to select based on the positional information and utilization circumstances of the available locker. Instead, as described above, the customer 40 or the vendor 41 in Gokcebay et al. is merely able to select an available locker within the customer's desired locker site in accordance with the availability information stored in the locker system database. Accordingly, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that the user is able to specify and reserve a

selected locker, and to require information from the control center by using the operating means of the locker or the user terminal as to the positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker so as to allow the user to specify the required address-for-delivery of the parcel based on the positional information and utilization circumstances of the locker, as recited in claim 9.

Furthermore, Gokcebay et al. does not disclose that the customer 40 is informed of when the ordered merchandise is stored in the selected locker. Instead, the customer is merely informed of the locker access code to unlock the selected locker, and the expected delivery time of the merchandise into the locker. Accordingly, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that the user concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with a parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information, the control center notifies the delivery company of the positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery when the recipient is absent, and the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel notifies the user terminal when the parcel is stored, as recited in claim 12.

Similarly, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest that the user concludes a utilization contract of a locker as an address-for-delivery of parcels, with a parcel recipient being absent, based on utilization reservations information, the control center notifies the delivery company of the positional information of the locker as the address-for-delivery when the recipient is absent, and the control center, when confirming that the parcel is stored in the locker as the address-for-delivery of the parcel, notifies the user terminal when the parcel is stored, as recited in claim 13.

Therefore, in view of the above, Gokcebay et al. clearly does not disclose or suggest each and every limitation of claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13.

Accordingly, claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13 are clearly not anticipated by Gokcebay et al. since Gokcebay et al. fails to disclose each and every limitation of claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13.

Furthermore, it is submitted that the clear distinctions discussed above are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made would not have been motivated to modify Gokcebay et al. in such as manner as to result in, or otherwise render obvious, the present invention as recited in claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13.

Therefore, it is submitted that the claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 12-13, as well as claims 2, 4, 6-8 and 10 which depend therefrom, are clearly allowable over the prior art as applied by the Examiner.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice thereof is respectfully solicited.

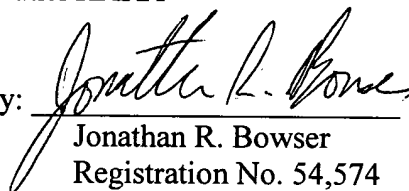
If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

A fee and a Petition for a three-month Extension of Time are filed herewith pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.136(a).

Respectfully submitted,

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August 9, 2005



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of :
Shuhei HARA : Docket No. 2003_0967A
Serial No. 10/626,572 :
Filed July 25, 2003 :
LOCKER SYSTEM

COPY

CLAIM OF PRIORITY UNDER 35 USC 119

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

THE COMMISSIONER IS AUTHORIZED
TO CHARGE ANY DEFICIENCY IN THE
FEES FOR THIS PAPER TO DEPOSIT
ACCOUNT NO. 23-0978

Sir:

Applicant in the above-entitled application hereby claims the date of priority under the International Convention of Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-055805, filed March 3, 2003, as acknowledged in the Declaration of this application.

A certified copy of said Japanese Patent Application is submitted herewith.

Respectfully submitted,

Shuhei HARA

By _____
Charles R. Watts
Registration No. 33,142
Attorney for Applicant

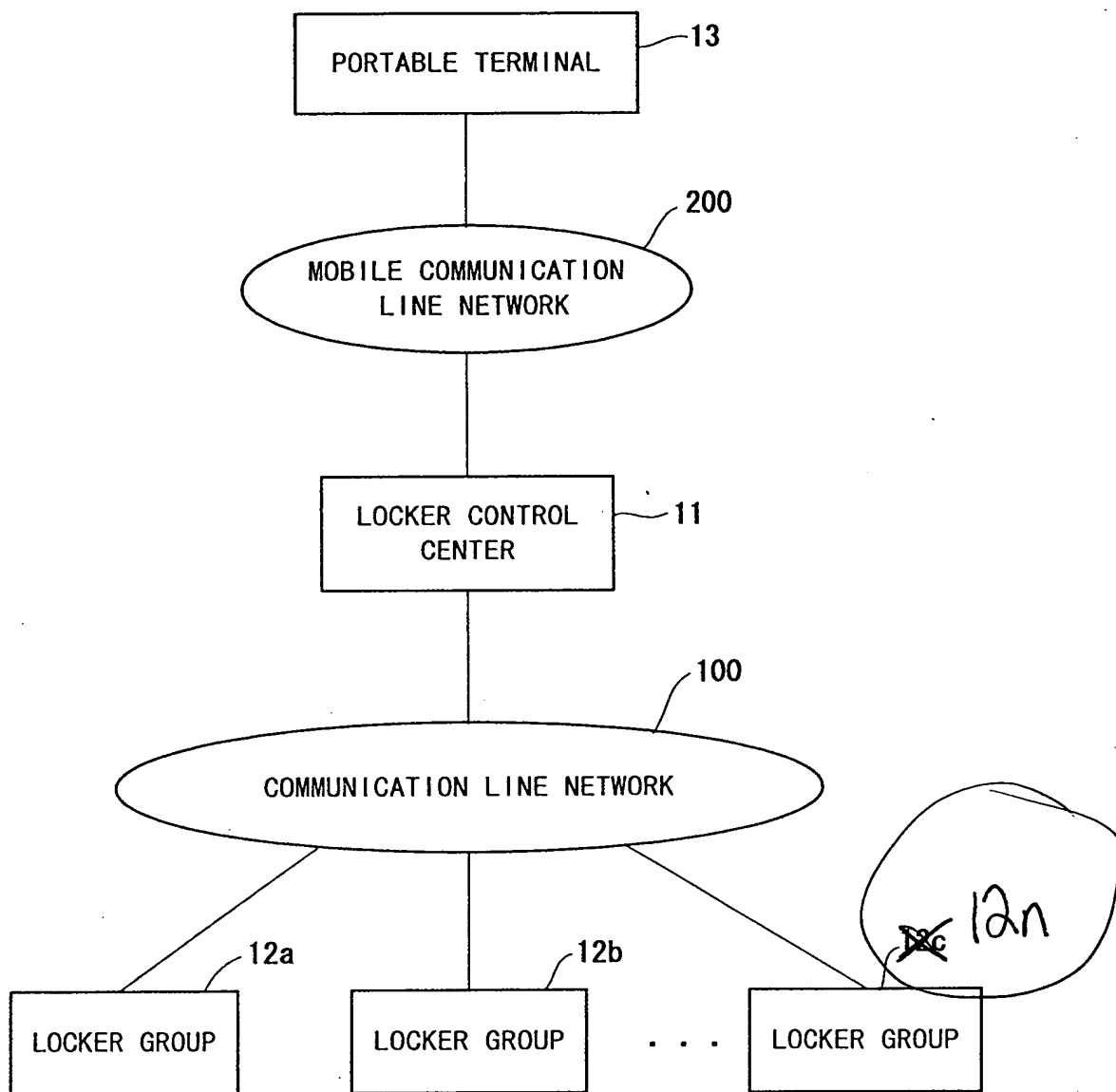
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October 23, 2003

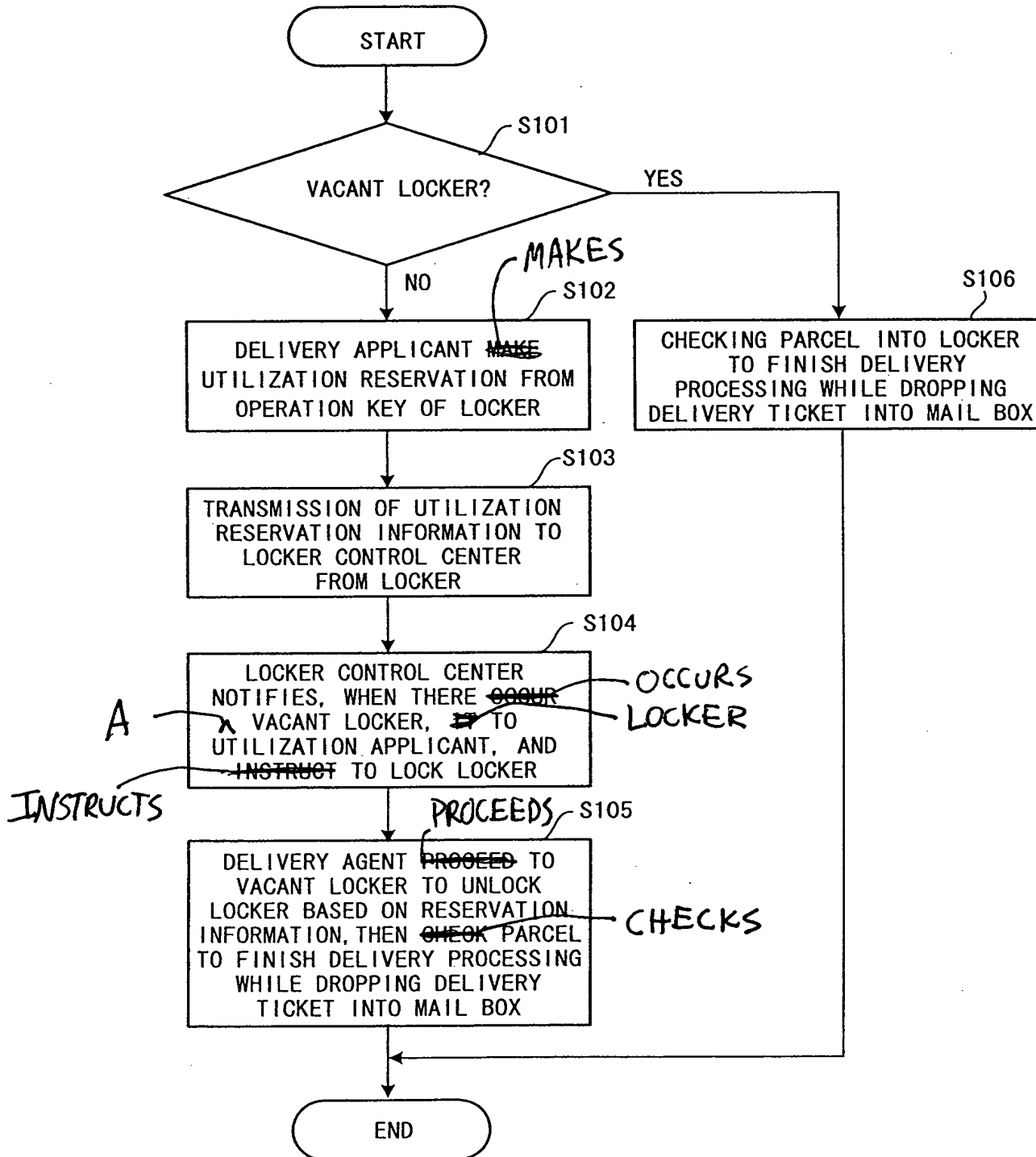


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FIG. 1

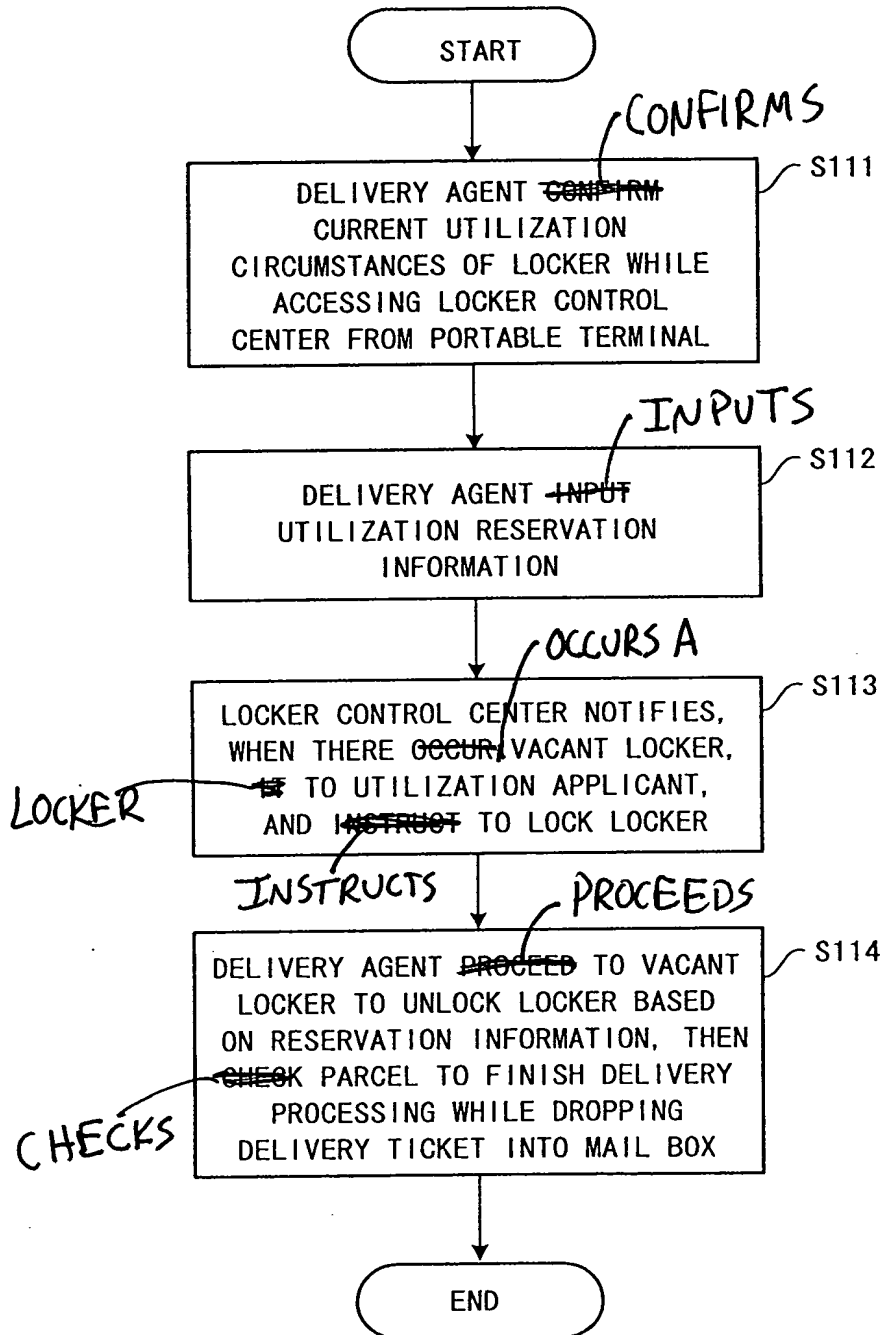


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FIG. 3

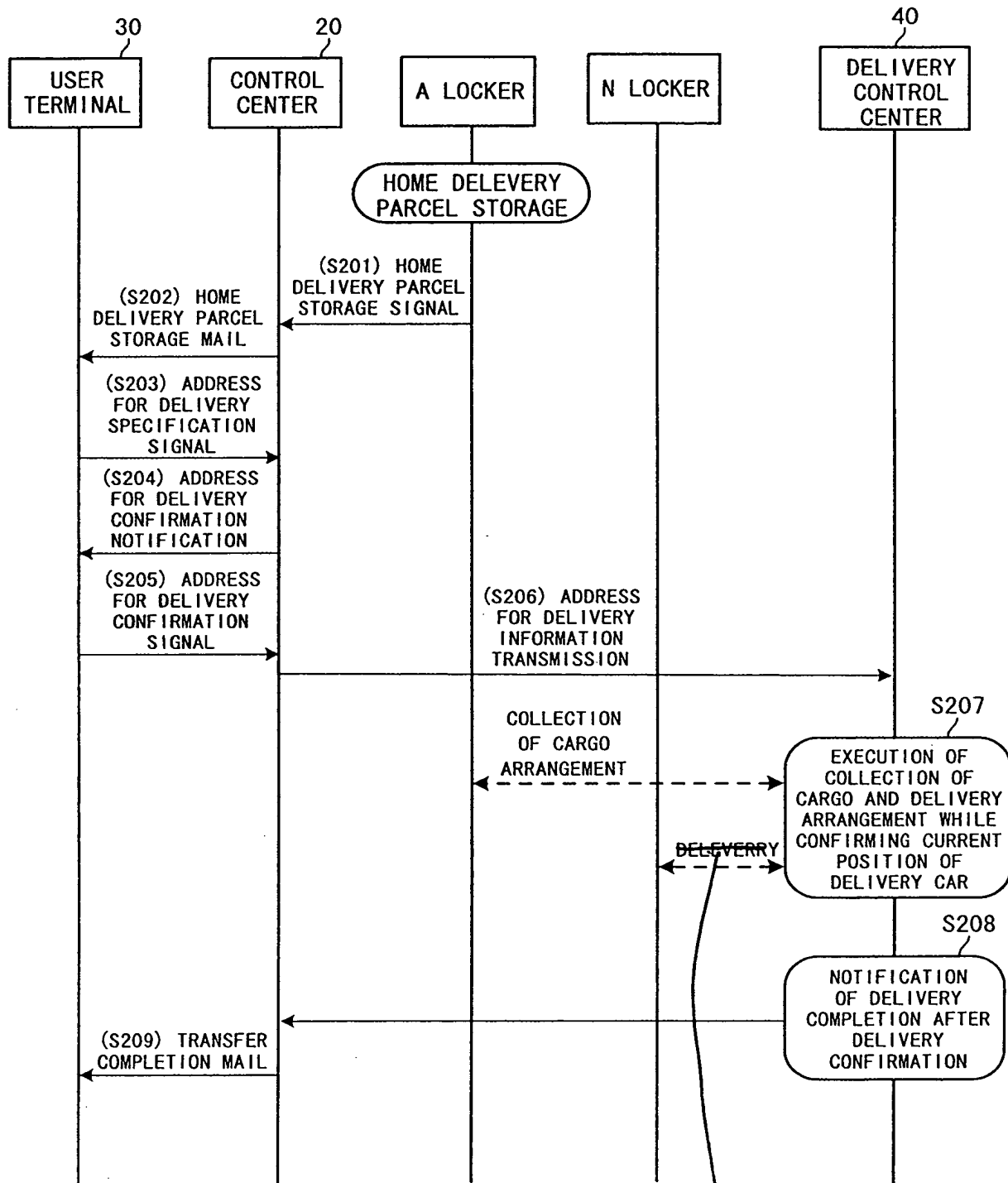
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FIG. 4



7/17

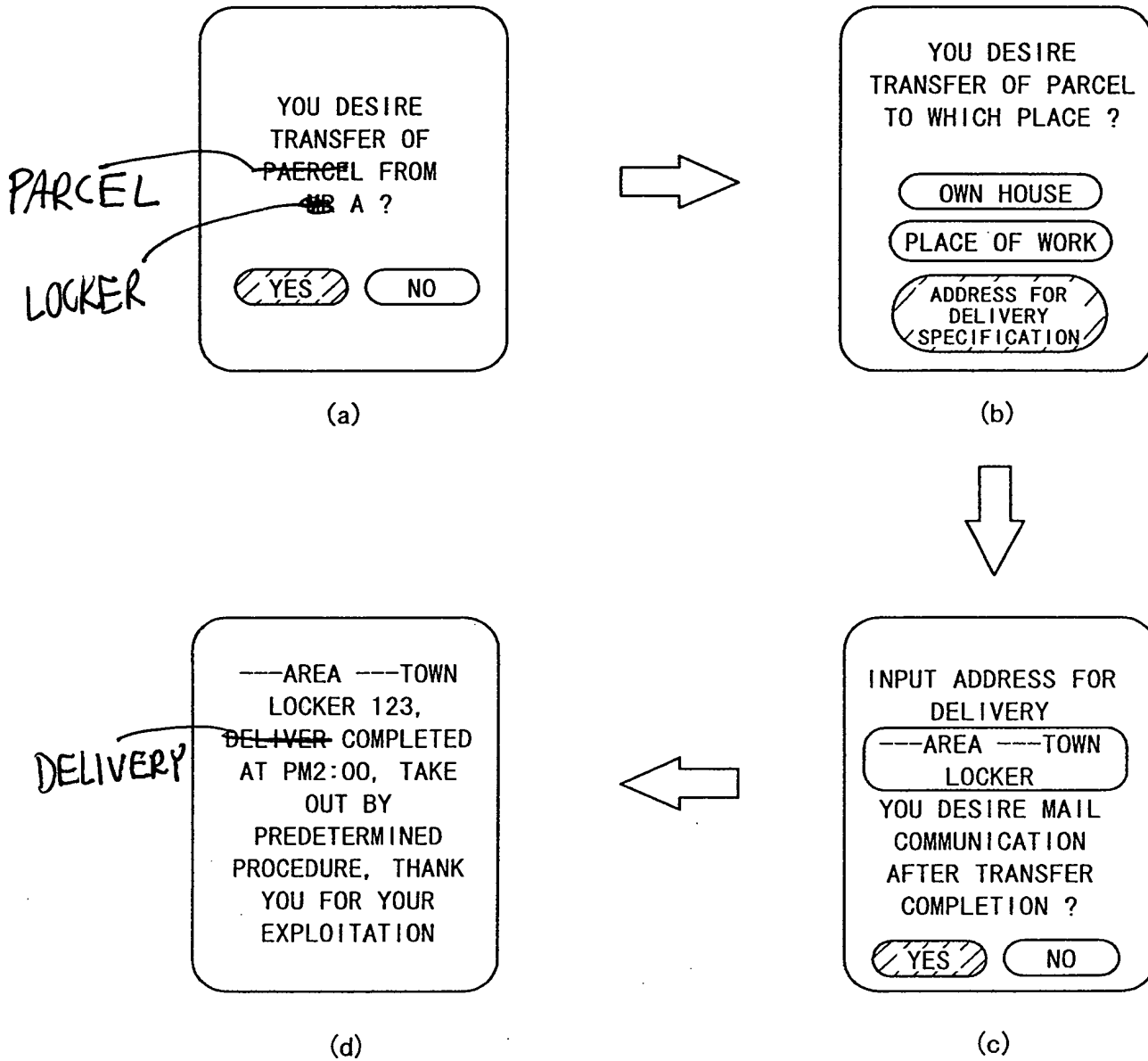
FIG. 7



DELIVERY

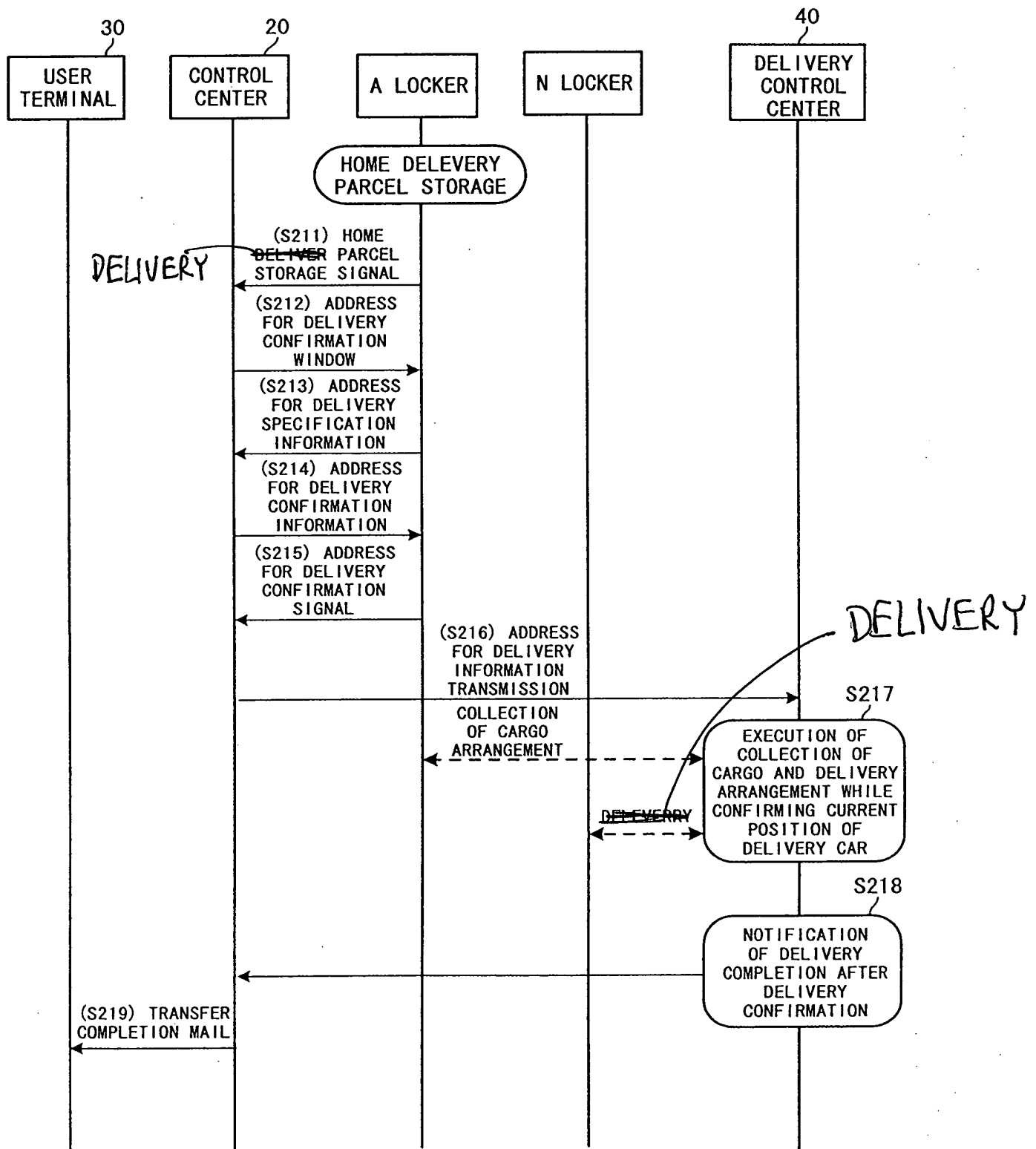
8/17

FIG. 8



9/17

FIG. 9



10/17

FIG. 10

STORED PARCEL
TRANSFER ?

1. YES
2. NO

(a)

SPECIFY ADDRESS FOR
DELIVERY

1. HOKKAIDO DISTRICT
2. TOHOKU DISTRICT
3. KANTO DISTRICT
4. •
5. •

(b)

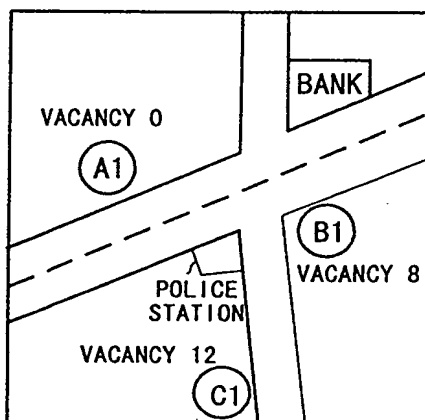
ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY IS
~~TOKYO~~—AREA —TOWN ?

1. YES
2. NO

(c)

DISPLAY OF VIEW MAP OF
LOCKER POSITIONED IN
THE VICINITY OF
TOKYO—AREA —TOWN

(d)



(e)

LOCKER OF ADDRESS
FOR DELIVERY IS
TOKYO— AREA—TOWN,
TRANSMIT TRANSFER
COMPLETION MAIL ?

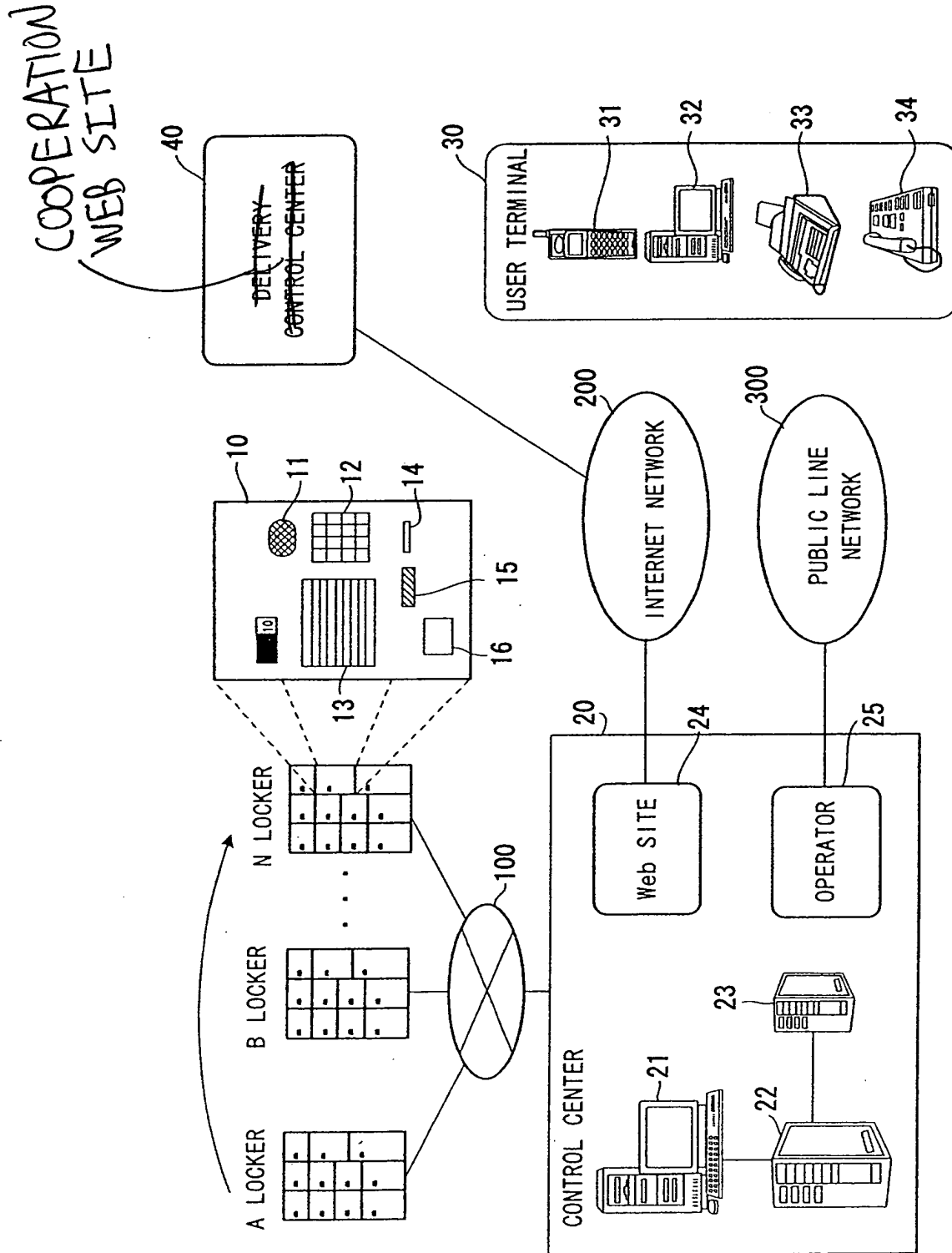
1. YES
2. NO

(f)

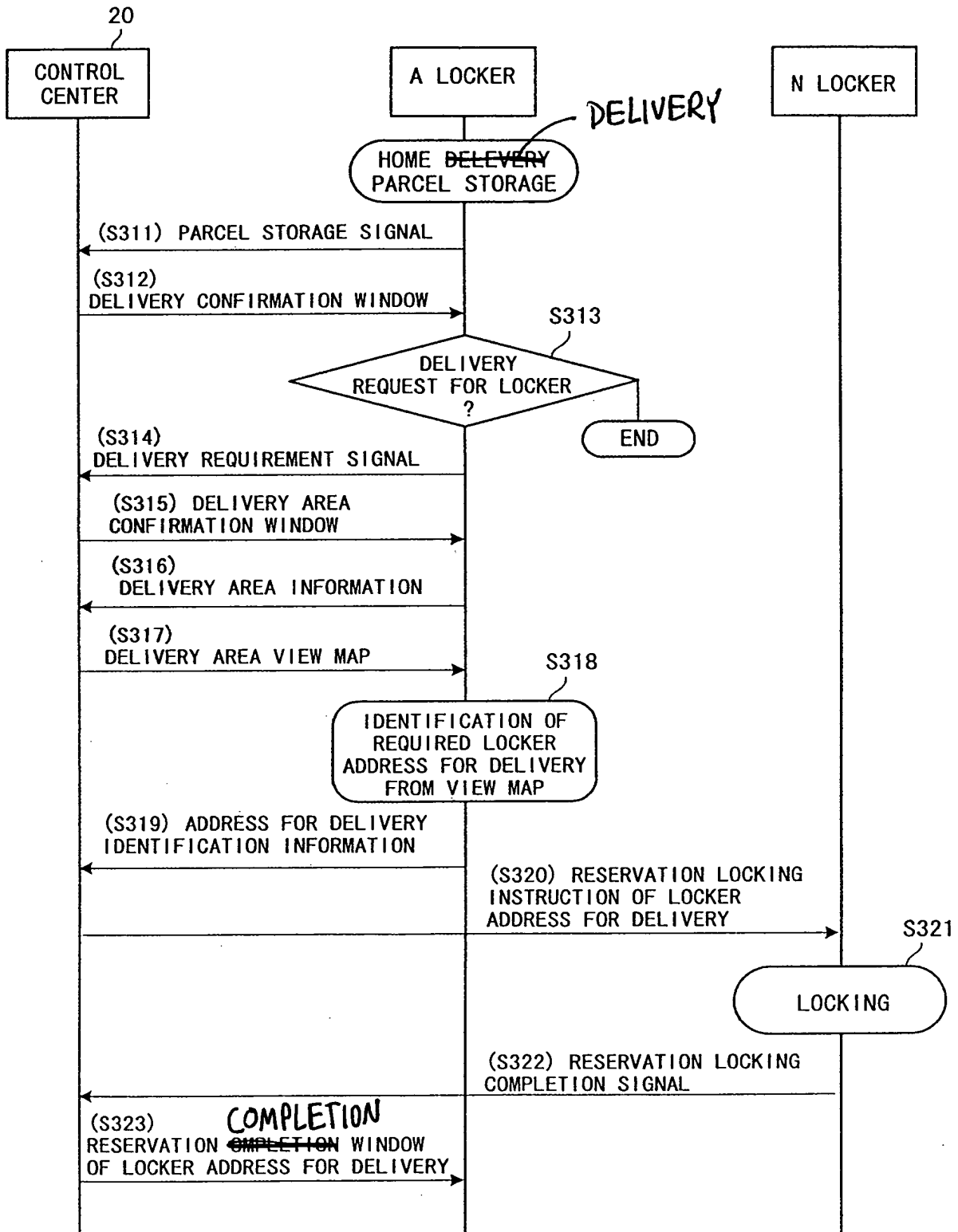
TOKYO

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FIG. 11



12/17

FIG. 12

13/17

FIG. 13

DESIRE LOCKER AS
ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY ?

1. YES
2. NO

(a)

SPECIFY ADDRESS
FOR DELIVERY

1. HOKKAIDO DISTRICT
2. TOHOKU DISTRICT
3. KANTO DISTRICT
4. •
5. •

(b)

ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY IS
~~TOKYO~~ —AREA —TOWN ?

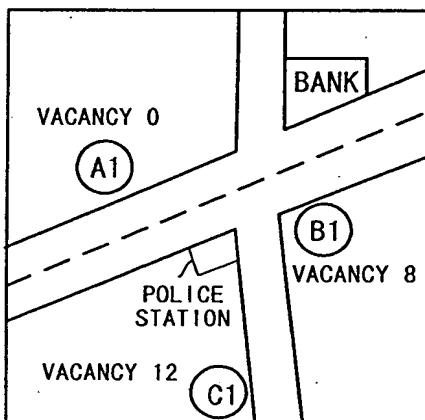
1. YES
2. NO

TOKYO

(c)

DISPLAY OF VIEW MAP
OF LOCKER POSITIONED
IN THE VICINITY OF
TOKYO —AREA —TOWN

(d)



(e)

RESERVATION OF LOCKER
ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY
IS COMPLETED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
UTILIZATION WAIT FOR
YOUR UTILIZATION AGAIN.

(f)